

NCA
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NIXON ON DOMESTIC PRESSURES AND DETENTE

ANNCR:

FORMER PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON'S MEMOIRS ARE APPEARING IN INSTALLMENTS IN A NUMBER OF NEWSPAPERS THIS WEEK, AND IN THE LATEST ONE HE DESCRIBES HOW POLITICAL PRESSURES IN THE UNITED STATES AFFECTED AMERICAN-SOVIET DETENTE. CHRIS KERN REPORTS.

VOICE:

RICHARD NIXON SAYS THE POLICY OF DETENTE WITH THE SOVIET UNION WOULD HAVE RUN INTO TROUBLE IN THIS COUNTRY EVEN IF THE WATERGATE SCANDAL HAD NEVER TAKEN PLACE. BUT HE ARGUES IN HIS MEMOIRS THAT WATERGATE ROBBED HIM OF THE ABILITY TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH GROWING CRITICISM OF THE SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP.

MR. NIXON SAYS THAT BY EARLY 1973 -- JUST BEFORE HIS SECOND SUMMIT MEETING WITH LEONID BREZHNEV -- THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP "APPEARED TO BE MOVING FULL SPEED IN PURSUIT OF DETENTE." BUT HERE IN THE UNITED STATES, HE WRITES, DETENTE WAS UNDER ATTACK FROM TWO DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS.

MR. NIXON SAYS CONSERVATIVES HAD NEVER FAVORED THE IDEA OF BETTER RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION BECAUSE OF IDEOLOGICAL OPPOSITION TO DEALINGS WITH COMMUNIST COUNTRIES. AND HE SAYS THAT LIBERALS AND AMERICAN ZIONISTS WERE INCREASINGLY DEMANDING THAT HE CHALLENGE THE SOVIET UNION'S HIGHLY RESTRICTIVE EMIGRATION POLICIES, WHICH WERE PREVENTING SOVIET JEWS FROM LEAVING FOR ISRAEL.

(OPT) THE TWO FORCES CONVERGED IN APRIL, 1973, WHEN CONGRESS TOOK UP MR. NIXON'S PROPOSAL TO GRANT THE SOVIET UNION

"MOST-FAVORED-NATION" TRADING STATUS. THE CONSERVATIVES HAD OPPOSED THE IDEA ALL ALONG. NOW, LIBERALS WERE DEMANDING THAT THE IMPROVED TRADING STATUS BE CONDITIONED ON INCREASED JEWISH EMIGRATION. THE DEBATE CONTINUED THROUGH THE YEAR. THEN, IN DECEMBER, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES DEFEATED THE MOST-FAVORED-NATION PROPOSAL. (END OPT)

BY EARLY 1974 -- WHEN THE THIRD AND FINAL NIXON-BREZHNEV SUMMIT MEETING WAS BEING PLANNED -- THE POLITICAL CORRUPTION SCANDAL HERE IN WASHINGTON THREATENED MR. NIXON WITH IMPEACHMENT. MEANWHILE, MR. NIXON WRITES, LIBERALS WERE IN "FULL CRY" OVER SOVIET REPRESSION OF DISSIDENTS AND RESTRICTED JEWISH EMIGRATION, AND CONSERVATIVES WERE ATTACKING PROPOSED STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATIONS AS WELL AS AMERICAN-SOVIET TRADE.

MR. NIXON ARGUES THAT THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP MAY HAVE DECIDED THAT HE WOULD AVOID IMPEACHMENT, OR IT MAY HAVE INTENDED TO DEMONSTRATE ITS INTEREST IN DETENTE NO MATTER WHO OCCUPIED THE WHITE HOUSE. IN ANY EVENT, THE SUMMIT MEETING TOOK PLACE IN MOSCOW IN JUNE, 1974, LESS THAN TWO MONTHS BEFORE MR. NIXON WAS FORCED TO RESIGN FROM OFFICE. MR. NIXON SAYS HE DOESN'T THINK THAT WATERGATE -- OR THE IMPEACHMENT HEARINGS THEN IN PROGRESS -- HAD MUCH DIRECT EFFECT ON THE CONFERENCE. BUT HE SAYS THE PRESSURE THAT THE SCANDAL GENERATED HAD "BADLY DAMAGED" HIS ABILITY TO DEAL WITH THE CRITICISM OF HIS DETENTE POLICY.